**The Caribbean National Parks by Natalia de Cuba Romero**

**Summary by Jared Sandberg**

This article summarized the US national parks in the Caribbean. It mixed in a few facts about each location with tourist information about how much things like hotels, taxis, and tours cost. It described the national parks as a “geographical kaleidoscope” with a great blend of people and cultures. It consisted of the US territories of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

The Forts of Old San Juan in San Juan, Puerto Rico were founded in 1521. The “Castillo de San Felipe del Morro” is a castle that was built to protect the colonists from sea attacks. It withstood gunfire from the US Navy during the Spanish-American War as late as 1898. It costs $2.

The Virgin Islands National Park in St. John is made up of land donated by Laurence Rockefeller to the National Park Service, and it became a park in 1956. It makes up two-thirds of St. John, 7200 acres of land and 5650 acres of offshore area. The “Reef Bay Trail Tour” is a 2.5-mile downhill trail where walkers can view “old plantations, bay leak trees, scrub bush, a small waterfall” among other things, and it ends with a swim in Reef Bay. It is a free tour that is offered twice a week, but has a 30 min boat ride back to Cruz Bay which costs $15, unless you want to walk back uphill for free. One of the world’s most beautiful beaches, Trunk Bay, is also in the park and has a marked snorkeling trail. Annaberg Sugar Mill Plantation is also on St. John, and the ruins of the plantation and a rum factory are available to tour for a $4 fee plus ferry fee. They’re demonstrations run by gardeners, basket weavers, and cooks. The garden produces tealeaves and medicines.

Buck Island Reed National Monument is an underwater elkhorn coral barrier reef, and was first protected in 1948. President Kennedy set aside the whole 180-acre island, along with 700 acres offshore as a national monument in 1961. It is located 1.5 miles off the northeastern coast of St. Croix. Half or full-day trips are offered, costing between $35-80. They consist of an orientation off the coast of West Beach, then a sail through a lagoon, a 30 min underwater trail. You cannot touch the reef because human contact damages the reef. There is also fire coral and manchineel tree that can burn or blind eyes to watch out for. West Beach nests endangered animals like hawksbills, leatherback, and green sea turtles.

Christiansted National Historic Site guards seven acres of the Northeastern harbor of Christiansted and is of Danish style. Denmark purchased St. Croix in 1733 for agricultural reasons and built a town, but the USA bought it later in 1917 because the sugar trade had died but the harbors remained strategic. A national park was established in 1952 and you can participate in a self-guided tour for a $2 fee. The site consists of the Steeple building, which was the first Lutheran Church, and has exhibits showing the role of the church, the original Amerindian residents, and black history as St. Croix was home to many freed slaves. There is also the Danish West India & Guinea Company Warehouse that was built in 1749, and is the largest and oldest slave-trading complex to survive under US control, but now is a US postal office. The Customs House, built in 1830, houses the National Park Service’s administration offices, while the Scale House, built in 1856 displays old iron scales that were used to weigh large barrels of goods, but now contains the visitor center for all St. Croix parks. The grounds of the Government House, which was built by joining two large townhouses in 1830, house the Virgin Islands government. There is also a Lutheran Church that offers worship services.

Congress recently created the Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve in 1992. It consists of 312 acres of land, and 600 acres of water. It contains a nursery for animals and food like sea grass, which is food for endangered animals like the sea turtles. It is run alongside the Virgin Islands government, and hopes to have new displays throughout, showing the history of early Amerindian communities and Columbus’s first landfall. Many including the Spanish, the English, the Dutch, the French Chapter of the Knights of Malta, and the Danes ruled St. Croix before the US. It contains the oldest remains of a European military structure, a “triangular earthen fortification” that was built in 1642.